

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising

identifying an item which needs to be sold by a specified time,

offering the identified item for sale at an auction which takes place at a predetermined time prior to the specified time,

receiving bids for said item from at least one bidder, and

selling said item to a highest bidder.

2. A method as in claim 1 wherein the item to be sold comprises a vendor's time-dependent commitment to provide a service.

3. A method as in claim 2 wherein the service comprises a freight service selected from the group consisting of scheduled trucking services, shipping services, air freight services, and rail freight services having excess capacity.

4. A method as in claim 2 wherein the service comprises a personal service selected from the group consisting of an opening at a specific time for a limousine rental, a boat charter or tour, a moving company slot of availability, a photographer appointment, a beauty salon appointment, a tanning shop appointment, a tutor appointment.

5. A method as in claim 2 wherein the service comprises rental for a specific time period of personal property selected from the group consisting of equipment and automobiles.

6. A method as in claim 1 wherein the item to be sold comprises a vendor's time-dependent commitment to provide an accommodation.

7. A method as in claim 6 wherein the accommodation comprises a stay for a specific time period

at a facility selected from the group consisting of a hotel or motel room, a bed and breakfast, a beach or ski condominium or weekly rental unit, a resort time share unit, and a meeting or banquet facility.

8. A method as in claim 6 wherein the accommodation comprises accommodation at a ticketed scheduled event selected from the group consisting of an airline flight, a bus departure, a train departure, a cruise, a sporting event, a concert, a play, and a movie.

9. A method as in claim 6 accommodation comprises a specific time for an admission to an amusement park or a tee time for a round of golf.

10. A method as in claim 1 wherein the item comprises a vendor's real or personal property.

11. A method as in claim 1 wherein
the offering of the item is made by an owner of the right to sell the item.

12. A method as in claim 11 the offering of the item is made by an internet auction site as an agent of an owner of the right to sell the item.

13. A method as in claim 12 wherein the offering is made on an internet auction site.

14. A method as in claim 1 wherein the item is identified by
searching an electronic database belonging to an owner of the right to sell the item, and

determining whether the owner has a capacity to sell the item.

15. A method as in claim 14 wherein the searching is conducted by the owner of the database.

16. A method as in claim 14 wherein the searching is conducted by an internet auction site.

17. A method as in claim 14 wherein the searching is conducted about one hour prior to a predetermined auction beginning time.

18. A method as in claim 10 further comprising
sending notices of the auction to predetermined recipients at a predetermined time prior to the predetermined auction beginning time.

19. A method as in claim 18 wherein the notices are transmitted over the internet.

20. A method as in claim 19 wherein the notices are transmitted to at least one recipient selected from the group consisting of auction site members, auction site users, travel agents, ticket agents, web home pages, and internet service provider home pages.

21. A method as in claim 20 wherein the notices are in the form of a communication selected from the group consisting of an Email, a pop-up ad, a banner and a block advertisement.

22. A method as in claim 21 wherein the notice lists item information, minimum bid information, auction beginning time and an auction closing time.

23. A method as in claim 20 wherein the notice displays a hot button to electronically link with an address selected from the group consisting of the auction site home page and the auction site for the item.

24. A method as in claim 23 wherein the notices are transmitted about 30 minutes prior to the auction beginning time.

25. A method as in claim 1 further comprising setting a reserve price on the item.

27. A method as in claim 13 wherein the auction site is a page at an internet auction site.

28. A method as in claim 27 wherein the page displays item identification information, current bid price, and time remaining until end of auction.

29. A method as in claim 28 wherein the page displays hot buttons for making a bid and for accessing additional information.

30. A method as in claim 29 further comprising transmitting a bid amount on the item from a bidder to the auction site, transmitting bidder identity and contact information to the auction site, and transmitting payment information to the auction site.

31. A method as in claim 30 wherein the payment information is selected from the group consisting of credit card information, debit card information, and other.

32. A method as in claim 31 further comprising determining the winning bidder at the auction end time.

33. A method as in claim 32 further comprising transmitting, after the auction end time, a successful bid notification to a winning bidder and a statement of charges.

34. A method as in claim 33 wherein the statement of charges includes a fee charged by the auction site.

35. A method as in claim 8 wherein

the ticketed event is selected from the group consisting of
an airline flight, a cruise, a sporting event, a concert, and a play.

36. A method as in claim 35 further comprising
beginning the auction at a predetermined auction beginning time prior to the ticketed event.

37. A method as in claim 36 further comprising
sending notices of the auction to predetermined recipients at a predetermined time prior to
the predetermined auction beginning time.

38. A method as in claim 37 wherein the event is an airline flight, and the notices list
identification of departure city and time of departure, and identification of destination city.

39. A method as in claim 38 wherein the notices further list carrier identification, class of
seat information, and an arrival time in the destination city.

40. A method as in claim 38 wherein the notice lists a reserve price which is set based a
predetermined relationship with at least one factor selected from the group consisting of :

- a) Availability of seats
- b) Location of seat or space
- c) Time of day the travel/event takes place
- d) Time of year the travel/event takes place
- e) Weather conditions in either the departure/arrival city
- f) If a major event is taking place in either departure/arrival city (e.g. Olympics)

- g) Vendor daily profit goal or intended profit margin
- h) Actual retail price of travel / event if purchased at that time
- i) Average selling price of tickets on the flight or at the event
- j) pricing information obtained from the Airline Tariff Publishing Company, and
- k) Cost per seat mile multiplied by the number of miles on flight.

41. A method comprising

identifying surplus capacity, according to predetermined criteria, for providing accommodation or services at a specific future time or time period,

offering a contract to provide all or a portion of such surplus capacity at an auction,

receiving bids for said contract from at least one bidder, and

selling said contract to a highest bidder, thereby reducing the surplus capacity.

42. A method as in claim 41 wherein

the offering of the surplus capacity is made by an owner of the right to sell the capacity.

43. A method as in claim 41 the offering of the surplus capacity is made by an internet auction site as an agent of an owner of the right to sell the surplus capacity.

44. A method as in claim 43 wherein the offering is made on an internet auction site.

45. A method as in claim 41 wherein the surplus capacity is identified by searching an electronic database belonging to an owner of the right to sell the surplus capacity determining an amount of the surplus capacity available for sale.

46. A method as in claim 45 wherein the searching is conducted by the owner of the database.

47. A method as in claim 45 wherein the searching is conducted by an internet auction site.

48. A method as in claim 41 wherein

the surplus capacity is for accommodation at future ticketed event selected from the group consisting of an airline flight, a cruise, a sporting event, a concert, and a play.

49. A method comprising

identifying surplus capacity, according to predetermined criteria, for a future event for which tickets are sold, said future event being capacity limited,

offering at least one surplus ticket representative of a contract to provide personal accommodation at the future event from said surplus capacity at an auction,

receiving bids for said at least one surplus ticket from at least one bidder, and

selling said surplus ticket to a highest bidder, thereby reducing the surplus capacity.

50. A method as in claim 49 wherein

the offering of the at least one surplus ticket is made by an owner of the right to sell the at least one ticket for the future event.

51. A method as in claim 49 the offering of the at least one surplus ticket is made by an internet auction site as an agent of an owner of the right to sell the at least one ticket for the future event.

52. A method as in claim 51 wherein the offering is made on an internet auction site.
53. A method as in claim 49 wherein the surplus capacity is identified by searching an electronic database belonging to an owner of the right to sell the least one ticket for the future event, and determining a quantity of tickets remaining available for sale.
54. A method as in claim 53 wherein the searching is conducted by the owner of the database.
55. A method as in claim 54 wherein the searching is conducted by an internet auction site.
56. A method as in claim 49 wherein the future event is selected from the group consisting of an airline flight, a cruise, a sporting event, a concert, and a play.
57. A method as in claim 49 further comprising beginning the auction at a predetermined auction beginning time prior to the future event.
58. A method as in claim 57 wherein the searching is conducted about one hour prior to a predetermined auction beginning time.
59. A method as in claim 58 further comprising sending notices of the auction to predetermined recipients at a predetermined time prior to the predetermined auction beginning time.
60. A method as in claim 59 wherein the notices are transmitted over the internet.

61. A method as in claim 60 wherein the notices are transmitted to at least one recipient selected from the group consisting of auction site members, auction site users, travel agents, ticket agents, web home pages, and internet service provider home pages.

62. A method as in claim 61 wherein the notices are in the form of a communication selected from the group consisting of an Email, a pop-up ad, a banners and a block advertisement.

63. A method as in claim 62 wherein the notice lists event information, minimum bid information, auction beginning time and an auction closing time.

64. A method as in claim 63 wherein the event is an airline flight, and the notice lists identification of departure city and time of departure, and identification of destination city.

65. A method as in claim 64 wherein the notice further lists carrier identification, class of seat information, and an arrival time in the destination city.

66. A method as in claim 61 wherein the notice displays a hot button to electronically link with an address selected from the group consisting of the auction site home page and the auction site for the ticket.

67. A method as in claim 66 wherein the notices are transmitted about 30 minutes prior to the auction beginning time.

68. A method as in claim 49 further comprising setting a reserve price on the at least one ticket.

69. A method as in claim 68 wherein the reserve price is set based a predetermined relationship with at least one factor selected from the group consisting of :

- a) Availability of seats

- b) Location of seat or space
- c) Time of day the travel/event takes place
- d) Time of year the travel/event takes place
- e) Weather conditions in either the departure/arrival city
- f) If a major event is taking place in either departure/arrival city (e.g. Olympics)
- g) Vendor daily profit goal or intended profit margin
- h) Actual retail price of travel / event if purchased at that time
- i) Average selling price of tickets on the flight or at the event
- j) pricing information obtained from the Airline Tariff Publishing Company, and
- k) Cost per seat mile multiplied by the number of miles on flight.

70. A method as in claim 52 wherein the auction site is a page at an internet auction site.

71. A method as in claim 70 wherein the page displays ticket identification information, current bid price, and time remaining until end of auction.

72. A method as in claim 71 wherein the page displays hot buttons for making a bid and for accessing additional information.

73. A method as in claim 72 further comprising transmitting a bid amount on the at least one ticket from a bidder to the auction site, transmitting bidder identity and contact information to the auction site, and transmitting payment information to the auction site.

74. A method as in claim 73 wherein the payment information is selected from the group consisting of credit card information, debit card information, and other.

75. A method as in claim 74 further comprising determining the winning bidder at the auction end time.

76. A method as in claim 25 further comprising transmitting, after the auction end time, a successful bid notification to a winning bidder and a statement of charges.

78. A method as in claim 76 wherein the statement of charges includes a fee charged by the auction site.

79. A method as in claim 76 further comprising transmitting an electronic ticket to the future event to the winning bidder.